

HERBALISM

INTRODUCTION

During the medieval period there were a lot of different practitioners of Medicine who each employed skills dependant upon their and their patient's social class. Although now considered to be archaic and presumable obsolete, those same practices have echoes within today's modern medical practices.

The first university for medicine was founded in the 10th century in Salarno Italy. Here the Greek manuscripts of Hippocrates and others were studied. These Greek practitioners believed that the body was made up from 4 Humours; these were sanguine (blood), choler, phlegm and melancholia. It was an imbalance in these that caused illnesses and so treatment and diagnosis of these and trying to get them back into balance was the only way to heal the sick. This usually involved herbal remedies to purge the humour or by bloodletting and laxatives. Another part of their medicine was the Doctrine of Signatures, which taught that flowers and other plants of certain colours were particularly useful in the treatment of certain diseases with which the colour was linked. For example, plants, which bore yellow flowers, such as dandelion and fennel, were linked to the liver's yellow bile and were recommended to treat jaundice.

Actual physicians were quiet rare staying mainly within the cities where the wealthy who were the only ones who could afford them, paid them considerable sums of money and where they accrued a variety of privileges. Formal medicine was performed and governed by the church and they taught that illness was divine retribution, and so many of the ill and sick went on pilgrimages in the hopes of making peace with god and therefore recovering. This however did not stop the monks from applying what they had learned from copying the earlier Greek manuscripts. Every monastery had an infirmary and the earliest hospitals were founded by monasteries and for the greater part of the population at this time this is where you went if you were sick and needed treatment.

There was a more accessible form of medicine for the masses; this came in the form of the wise woman or folk healers present in most villages. They also used various herbal remedies as well as charms, stones and healing waters from nearby springs with supposed healing powers. Some even used older pagan spells and prays, but anywhere where the church was strong and influential these were forbidden, and so they changed and instead of spells they became prays to god or one of the saints.

Thus, on one side there were the university-trained physicians, all men, who were based in towns and cities and served the wealthy. On the other side there were the folk healers, usually women, in the rural areas. In the middle were healers in the religious orders, who incorporated both aspects of healing into their practices. All used many of the same plant remedies but operated in distinctly separate social and economic groups and with great distrust and contempt for each other. The situation was amplified over the centuries resulting in religious persecution and witch hunting which ultimately led to the execution of thousands of folk healers who were so skilled that they were thought to have a pact with the devil.

MEDIEVAL MEDICAL TEXTS

Hippocrates is credited with introducing the scientific approach to medicine, based on diagnosis and treatment. His work was augmented by a Greek military doctor, Dioscorides, whose *De Materia Medica*, appeared in the 1st century. Around the same time, Pliny the Elder produced his *Historia Naturali*, which describes plants and their healing qualities. These works were the foundation of the curriculum studied by

the medieval scholars at university and were also implemented by the monks who copied the texts.

The earliest known herbal of British origin is the Saxon Leech Book of Bald, written in the 10th century. Around 950, a nobleman named Bald persuaded England's King Alfred to commission the book, which combined all aspects of herbalism - Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Greco-Roman and Arab. A mixture of sacred ritual and herbal remedies, it discusses 500 plants and their healing qualities. In practices prescribed in this text, herbs were just as often worn as amulets to ward off evil or disease as they were taken internally.

The most notable original medical text emerging from the religious sector during the Middle Ages was Hildegard's *Medicine*, written by Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Abbess of the Benedictine Rupertsburg convent in the German Rhineland. A nun from age 15, Hildegard claimed that visions of God commanded her to treat the sick and compile her herbal formulas. Her book combined Catholicism and folk medicine. She was the only medieval woman who left a written account of "wise woman" healing practices.

One of the largest sources of pharmaceutical and medical information from the middle ages is the *Compendium of Medicine* (circa 1250) by Gilbertus Anglicus (Gilbert the Englishman). Translated in the early 15th century from Latin to Middle English the text consists of medicinal recipes with guides to diagnosis, medicinal preparation and prognosis. The text names over 400 ingredients. Treatments are presented roughly from head to tail, beginning with headache and ending with haemorrhoids.

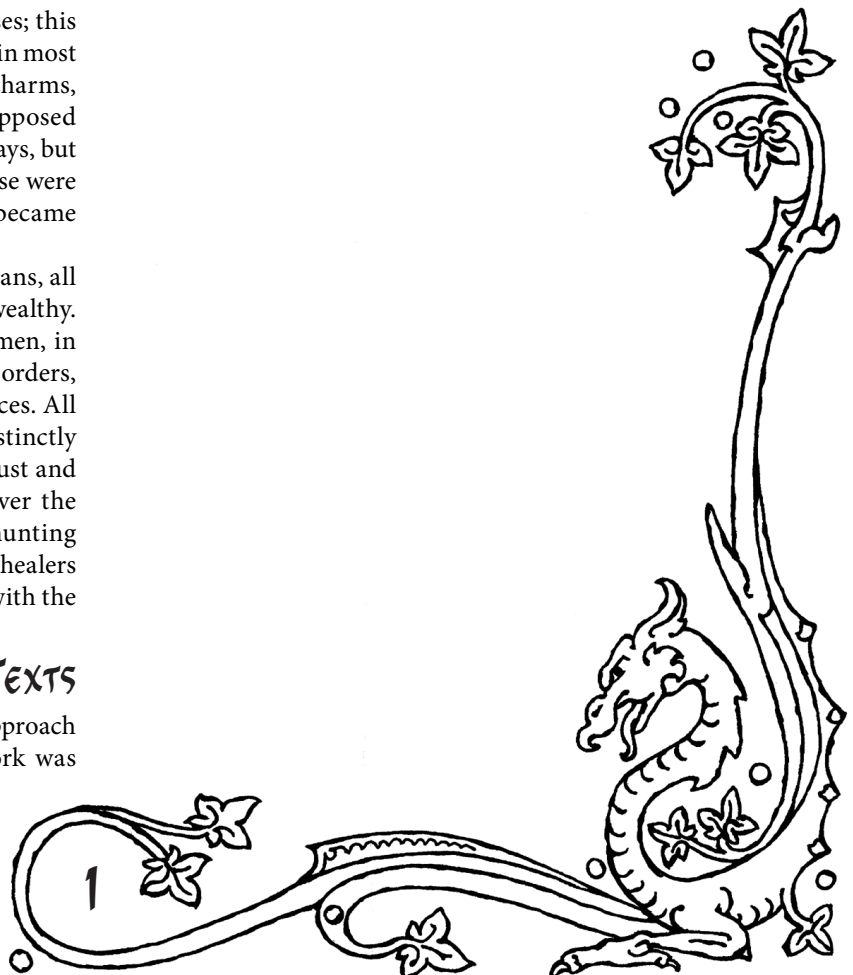
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Hippocrates' *On Ancient Medicine*,

translated by Francis Adams.

Hildegard of Bingen,

biography by a University of California student.



MEDIEVAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS LEECHES

The following packages can be added to the templates in ObaM to make various medical practitioners.

PHYSICIANS

Physicians were scholars who studied at universities. In order to be declared a physician, a student had to prove himself able to recite, lecture and debate the contents of his studies. Replace the academic package with this one on the academic NPC.

Ancient Language: Xanarium
Read & Write -1
Research
Etiquette -1
Knowledge: Anatomy
Knowledge: Disease
Knowledge: Plants
Surgery
First Aid

BARBER/SURGEONS

Surgeons belonged to the working class and did the jobs that were considered beneath physicians, such as bloodletting and pulling teeth. Most surgeries were performed by the barber/surgeon. The most common operations were for hernias, gallstones and caesarean section. Replace the craftsman package with this one on the Craftsman NPC.

Surgery -1
First Aid -1
Stewardship +1
Knowledge: Anatomy
Folk Lore
Herbalist
Craft: Grooming
Diplomacy
Persuasion

MONKS

Medical aid would be provided to the poor, travellers and pilgrims who visited. Some monks gained such a reputation for being skilled healers that they were sought out by lay patients. In some cases the care of such outsiders gave rise to hospitals apart from the monks' infirmaries. Replace the academic package with this one on the Clergyman NPC.

Ancient Language: Xanarium
Read & Write -1
Research
Herbalist -1
Knowledge: Anatomy
Knowledge: Disease
Knowledge: Plants
Surgery
First Aid -1

Leeches were lay practitioners whose training was more practical than theoretical. Practicing without proper education, they relied more on informal observation and folk medicine. They may have been apprenticed to a barber-surgeon or physician at some point. Replace the craftsman package with this one on the Craftsman NPC.

Surgery
First Aid -1
Folk Lore
Herbalist
Craft: Grooming
Survival +1
Farming
Search -1

DENTATORES

Dentatores were the dentists of the medieval era and were so expensive that usually only the very rich could afford their services. They removed decay, which was believed to be caused by worms, and filled teeth with ground bone. Gold was used for filling cavities by the fifteenth century. They repaired loose teeth with metal bindings and made dentures from ox and other animal bones. Replace the craftsman package with this one on the Craftsman NPC.

Surgery
First Aid
Stewardship +1
Knowledge: Teeth
Folk Lore
Herbalist
Craft: Teeth
Diplomacy
Trade: Dentistry -1

HERBALISTS (FOLK HEALERS)

Practitioners of popular healing varied widely from place to place within Europe. In some areas the healers were mostly women; in other they were predominantly men. In some places the secrets of healing were passed only from woman to woman or from men to men, but in other regions the gender alternated with each transmission. In some places healers were thought to possess inherited skills and if an attempt were made to pass these skills to people without these inherited gifts, they would be ineffectual. Use Druid as is.

MIDWIVES

Midwives were taught their duties by other midwives or were introduced into the craft by fathers or husbands who were medical men. Midwives were usually apprenticed to older more experienced midwives. The only requirement for becoming a candidate for midwifery was a statement from the parish priest attesting to the applicant's good character.

Use any NPC type and package, but add Knowledge: Childbirth.

NURSES

Medieval nurses were women who attended to the more basic needs of the ill in hospitals. Many joined monastic orders, but there were secular nursing orders as well, especially during the Plague. As the disease spread women from all socio-economic groups came forward to care for the sick. Noble-born women, who became nurses of the poor or sick, were considered "nursing saints." No special skills or packages here.



NOTE

The most common diseases during the middle ages were dysentery, epilepsy, influenza, diphtheria, scurvy, typhoid, smallpox, scabies, impetigo, leprosy, pneumonia, stroke, heart attack, scrofula (chronically swollen lymph nodes, later identified as a form of tuberculosis), St. Vitus' Dance (rheumatic chorea, a temporary disorder of the parts of the brain that control movement and coordination), and St. Anthony's Fire (ergotism, caused by ingesting toxic amounts of alkaloids produced by a fungus that infests rye - symptoms included gangrene with burning pain in the extremities, convulsions, hallucinations, and severe psychosis).

HERBS/PLANTS

Each herb or plant will be listed with the following:

Season, when it will be found growing,

Cost, how much it costs if you were to buy it, raw or prepared, per ounce. All prices in Imperial standard.

Uses, what it was used for historically,

Successes how many successes you need to make the herb, and how long it takes for each roll.

Strength for healing how many extra dice per success you get if used in healing.

Rarity, which is how many success you need to get 1d10 ounce of the herb when collecting in the wild.

ALOE

SEASON	COST	HABITAT	SUCCESSSES	STRENGTH	RARITY
Autumn/Winter	1c /2c	Temperate Grasslands	1 - minute	1	1

USES

Externally for wounds, haemorrhoids, ulcers and hair loss, internally as a laxative

ANGELICA (WILD CELERY)

SEASON	COST	HABITAT	SUCCESSSES	STRENGTH	RARITY
Summer	3c /6c	Temperate Mountains	5 - 10 minutes	1	2

USES

Angelica leaf necklaces were worn as protection against illness and witchcraft. Angelica was reputed to be the only herb witches never used and its presence in a woman's garden or cupboard was successfully used as a defence against charges of witchcraft. Used in cough medicine along with Horehound, Fennel root, Radish and Anise.

ANISE

SEASON	COST	HABITAT	SUCCESSSES	STRENGTH	RARITY
Summer	6c /9c	Temperate Rural	5 minute	1	3

USES

Used to clear mucus from the respiratory system. It was also recommended by other renowned physicians as a breath freshener, digestive aid, a cure for "hicket" (hiccups), headache, asthma, insomnia, nausea, lice and infant colic. Anise was so popular in medieval England as a spice, medicine and perfume that in 1305 Edward I placed a special tax on it to raise money to repair London Bridge.

APPLE

SEASON	COST	HABITAT	SUCCESSSES	STRENGTH	RARITY
Autumn	1b	Temperate Rural	1 minute	½	1

USES

Raw apples as a tonic for healthy people and cooked apples as the first treatment for any sickness.

BALM (MELISSA)

SEASON	COST	HABITAT	SUCCESSSES	STRENGTH	RARITY
Summer	6c /9c	Subtropical Forest	5 - 10 minutes	1	3

USES

Lemon balm and bee balm were prescribed for nervousness and anxiety in the form of Melissa water or Eau de Melisse. Recommended for treatment of insomnia, arthritis, headache, toothache, sores, digestive problems and cramps, balm was considered to be something of a cure-all. The leaves were also used on wounds to stop bleeding. Wine was usually added to this herb to make it easier to swallow.

